

# *The Midland*

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## **To Nature**

By MAHLON LEONARD FISHER

Be thou my priestess, who hast ever stood  
Between me and the World! Confess him, then,  
Who hath too often gone the ways of men,  
And grant him absolution by thy rood  
Upreared 'mid Bloom and Beauty, where they brood.  
And let him have, at last, thine unction sweet;  
Some share of Autumn's gauze for winding-sheet;  
For candles, two wan lilies in a wood.  
And chant him, without sadness, as thou hast  
In summers numberless, thy litanies,  
If so the soft responses be the trees',  
And theirs the sole enfolding shadow cast.  
And, in thy silence, read him, as before,  
Thy Ritual of Stillness— nothing more!

## **Teacher Sylvia**

### **A Quaker Idyll**

By MARY G. CHAWNER

In the breezy freshness of the September morning, the gray-clad figure of Elias Mendenhall—huge, but buoyant with youth—turned slowly into the path under the maples of the meeting-house yard. It was not often that he had walked to meeting in so leisurely a fashion, with no farm chores, past or prospective, on his mind. He felt pleasure in the mere spring of the thick turf under his feet, and keener pleasure in the beauty of the overarching boughs veined darkly against the translucent green, every daintily-notched leaf distinct and crisp. Even familiar things seemed new in the new world to which this shady path was leading him on this first First-day of the school year.

In his twenty years Elias had known only the low, white, wooden meeting-house of his country neighborhood with its companion schoolhouse; hence he looked with some awe upon the bare brick building that rose before him, barn-shaped, with its upper and lower rows of staring windows, and over its door the name "Fairfield Friends' Academy."

The thought that this was indeed the Boarding School,—the goal of his hopes, the vision that had moved before him all the summer long, across the blooming clover, up and down the dusty corn rows,—made him straighten his shoulders and quicken his

step as he crossed the little graveled space before the door.

On the broad stone threshold he stopped, and turning slowly about, glanced over the surrounding fields, the green meadows, the rich brown of the fall plowing, all satisfying to the farmer's sense of beauty. Elias took off his broad-brimmed hat and held it before him in both big, red hands. He looked elemental, as if sprung from the earth; a son of the soil in his very aspect; and this in spite of his straight-cut suit of stiff new jeans with the Quaker collar standing high at the back. He lifted his face full to the genial warmth—the features were massive, bronzed with the summer. The heavy flaxen hair caught a touch of gold.

His wide, blue eyes half closed against the glare. "I'm glad it's a fine day," he thought; "mother can get out to meeting. They'll be starting about now," with a glance at the sun.

Then, as if recollecting himself, he thrust the hat under one arm, pulled a huge silver watch from his vest pocket, and soberly studied its face for a moment.

It was a quarter after ten. Meeting would "take up" at half past. A cloud of dust appeared on the road down the slope. He must not be found idling in that bareheaded fashion. True to his Quaker training, he covered himself decently with the broad black hat, and stepped gravely in at the door.

In the strip of dim, cool entry Elias paused a moment, then opened the door of "the men's side."

The empty room with its bare white walls looked almost cavernous. Not even the curtainless windows seemed to let in the real light of outdoors upon the long rows of drab-painted benches. Elias's footsteps sounded down the aisle. He seated himself where he could see, through an open side door, the leaves moving in the breeze. A robin dived across with a flash of russet. The ticking of the clock echoed loudly through the stillness.

People began to come, in various groups—the sexes separating, as usual, though occasionally a little girl's hat bobbed above the benches on "the men's side," or a small boy was haled to a seat beside his mother. Once or twice a family took seats together, Elias noted with some surprise. The men took off their hats as soon as they were seated, Elias noted also,—and took off his own. The women and girls wore, most of them, straw hats with ribbons, and sometimes flowers; to Elias they looked gay, but rather pretty. These Friends were clearly "Progressive."

At length the room was fairly well filled. A short old man in very wide trousers climbed the steps of the "gallery" at the front of the room, took his seat next to the clerk's desk in the middle, removed his hat, and laid it on the floor beside him. Meeting was set.

Silence fell upon the company, and grew deeper—so deep that it could be felt. It was not a restless, empty interval—but a serious, purposeful waiting. Words might come of it—words halting or eloquent;

thoughts must come of it. They came to Elias as he sat with folded arms and bent head. Indeed Elias thought so deeply that he heard only as an undertone to his meditation the shrilling of a locust outside, the soft breath of the wind in the trees, the occasional bird calls, and the echoing clock. His thoughts were woven of the old and the new—the old life with its homely comfort, its love, its straitness; the new life with its hope, its opportunity—which he had earned for himself. He felt, as he had never felt before, that he was a learner. The words were so much a part of his thought that he did not raise his head when a voice somewhere before him, a deep, resonant voice, repeated simply:

“But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.”

Then in the silence Elias's thought took up the words of the fifteenth of John, for he knew the chapter well—“I am the true vine”—and followed on verse by verse, until a woman's low tones began a prayer. The sweet voice rose high and clear, full of human aspiration and human yearning; and when silence came again, thought came more richly yet—thought of Christian dignity that blends into Christian humility so that they are one. “Henceforth I call you not servants—I have called you *friends*.” Elias understood better than he had ever understood before the name his people had chosen for themselves.

A woman's voice again—singing! It was clear and sweet. Elias gravely lifted his head; he had never heard music before in meeting. It was a young woman a few seats in front of Elias who sang; of slender figure with a well-poised head and firm, graceful shoulders. Elias looked steadily, unconsciously. He did not think; he merely saw, and heard. The singing ceased. Color glowed in the cheek of the young woman; she closed her lips firmly and bent her head. Elias glanced away quickly—anywhere, over the meeting. The clock's ticking seemed to fill the room now with an insistent, hollow clatter. He glanced at the gallery, with its tiers of benches rising against the wall; at the three men seated there, all sternly bowed; at the tall woman, sitting stiffly in her gray silk shawl and her gray Quaker bonnet; at the plump little woman with a fresh, ruddy face under the smooth dark hair and black straw bonnet. There Elias's eyes rested.

Presently she rose, and standing calmly with one hand upon the wooden rail before her, spoke a few eager, simple words of the individual "gift" which no one must neglect.

Elias knew that the words were spoken for the singer—and he was grateful. And what she said was right. Why should not one sing—if one had the "gift"? A thrush's note rang out near at hand—the song bubbled rapturously on. Did that disturb worship? Was it not, perhaps, itself worship? He looked again at the sweet face in the gallery; and he glanced once more at the singer. There was only a

faint flush in her cheek and her eyes looked out calmly.

Then the little old man who sat head of the meeting wrinkled his forehead, and looked at the clock; glanced about inquiringly, and gave his hand to the man next him. In a moment the silent handshake had passed over the company. Then there was stir, and talking; meeting had broken.

Already the horizon had widened for Elias Mendenhall, the next day to be enrolled a student of Fairfield Academy. Early on that bright morning Elias joined his fellows in the dooryard of the boys' dormitory. They were a goodly company of young men, most of them clad, like Elias, in homemade jeans of common gray—or dyed brown with butter-nut or purplish blue with dogwood. There was hearty, boyish talk and some informal footracing and jumping contests, of which Elias was a grave observer, too shy to try his prowess.

At the school hour Principal Silas Hobbs, a tall, stooped, kindly man appeared with an armload of books, and the boys followed him with due decorum through the grove to the schoolhouse. As they approached the brick building, Elias, last of the group, noticed some settling of coat collars and smoothing of hats—and then, in the open space before the door, he saw the young women of Fairfield Academy led by their teacher, also a young woman—of slender figure with firm, graceful shoulders and well poised head. Her clear eyes were calm, but there was a slight flush in her cheeks. Her dress, of a familiar

silvery gray, Elias did not notice. Nor did he note another face in all the group of blooming girls. For this was the singer of yesterday, this was Teacher Sylvia.

Scarcely did Elias know how he reached with the other students the spacious schoolroom; how he found his place at one of the double desks stoutly built of the native black walnut; nor how he was enrolled as a student of algebra, Latin, natural philosophy, and English literature, and provided with books for beginning these formidable, yet alluring, subjects. He had made the plunge into a new life—like a plunge into deep water—and sensed the zest of the coming struggle. Confidently he opened the topmost book of the pile on his desk; and timidly he lifted his eyes for the first time to the girls' side of the room—and caught only the copper gleam of the brown hair of Teacher Sylvia in the midst of a sunny group.

So lessons began.

In the days that followed, Elias Mendenhall, under the clear tuition of Principal Silas, met the test he had so long coveted; so long trained for unconsciously in the concentrated mental exercise of his brief weeks of winter school and his hours of reading snatched hungrily from long days of summer toil. Mathematics and science, and even the unintelligible Latin, were merely hard play, in which he could meet his fellows fairly and prove his strength and skill; even as he met them in the battle-rush of football, the glorious "free-for-all" played by the horde of boys



every evening in a nearby field. For not all of his vigor could be put into paradigms and problems. This war-play was tonic to Elias; his great body swept, supple and resistless, across the field following the flying black ball. But the homage of his fellows in the nickname they gave him, "Ox"—"Ox Mendenhall"—he did not quite like that homage just to the brute strength of him.

For beyond his known powers of muscle and mind a new self was arising to his amazement, and he wandered in an unknown land; under the tuition of Teacher Sylvia he was reading the English poets.

Sylvia—the very name was a talisman to open gates of delight. Elias had never heard that name or any like it. When he learned its meaning from the Latin, that dead language suddenly became alive. When he found that name in an English song, he knew that poetry was no longer alien to him, but his own, the very words fashioned to his thought:

"Holy, fair, and wise is she,  
The Heavens such grace did lend her,  
That she might admired be . . . ."

And she who, girlish and unafraid, had come a thousand miles into the West to open the gates to these young Friends, to engraft upon their sturdy Quaker simplicity the flower of beauty, was already acknowledged queen of her domain. Already the young women under her charge were adopting with feminine facility her little refinements of dress and manner. Already, both in and out of the class room, they were apt pupils of Teacher Sylvia, whose charm had brought them also into fields of enchantment.

But why should these facile young women smile covertly when Elias was called upon to read the stanzas of Spenser? Elias could not answer that question. He knew his voice was deep; it fairly boomed in the tiny class room, so that to himself it sounded strange, almost terrifying. And yet he liked to read those stanzas in the gracious presence of Teacher Sylvia, whose eyes smiled when her face was grave. The girls read those same stanzas so trippingly—he did not quite like their way. He liked best Teacher Sylvia's way; for that was slow, rich music—even better to Elias's mind than Teacher Sylvia's singing which fell so sweetly clear on the hush of First-day meeting; even better music than the hymns, led by that same clear voice, in which he himself could fearlessly join his full bass in the twilight of the students' evening meeting. He could not choose but sing, for on his first shy attempt Teacher Sylvia had spoken to him as he left the room:

"Thy voice is wonderful, Elias, and it befits thee; thee is the only man in school who has a right to such a voice."

But better still this music of the very words—the unending, mellifluent strains of "The Faery Queen," with bright pictures flashing forth now and again, like reflections from the clear water of a flowing stream. On the stream of poesy, indeed, Elias was fairly embarked. He must yield himself to its full tide.

The months of autumn waxed and waned and swept Elias into the brisk current of his new life, a

life of varied zest—of rough athletic play, of keen mental exercise, of the deep pleasure of poetry. His study now was Shakespeare: beyond the requirements of the class-room he read; he lost himself in rich comedy, in powerful tragedy, and caught to his heart every sparkling lyric. His soul grew great perforce to match those "spacious times of great Elizabeth."

With the winter, sports both for boys and girls were shifted to the creek nearby. There was much jollity; among the boys there were lusty games of hockey, as good fun as football. But Elias liked best to linger after the other skaters in the red glow of winter sunsets; or to rise in the early dusk and catch the dawn on the frosty winter landscape. On one such morning he saw, far away down the shining path of ice arched with bare tree branches, a slender, girlish figure against the glow of the sunrise—a figure of light and joyous motion, like a nymph of the woodland. *Sylvia* in truth!

By March the only sign of winter was the ragged line of snow along the pasture fence on the slope beyond the creek. There could be no games yet, and so Elias found himself on the wet spring evenings trudging far across the country through fields and woods.

One clear April evening as he crossed the little brown stream near the school yard, he caught a glimpse of blue and stooped to pick a violet from its green leaves enmeshed in the thick bed of withered grass. Then another, and another; and the thicken-

ing dots of blue led him on toward the beaten path that crossed the hollow.

When Elias, stooping, reached the path and straightened himself with a jerk, his eyes met the eyes of Teacher Sylvia.

The eyes were smiling, and the lips, too, as she spoke. "Why, I didn't know there were violets here! I've been looking, and looking, everywhere."

Elias's face, now rid of summer tan, had flushed vividly to his thick hair; his big black hat was awry; the violets drooped from the great fist held before him. But his eyes were fearless and deeply blue; for Elias suddenly realized sharply that here was one person—the only one in the world, perhaps—before whom he might stand unashamed with a posy of fresh-picked violets.

"There aren't very many, I think," Elias answered, looking straight at the slender figure in blue linen with crisp white apron. "I just came across these; they're the first I've seen—I guess this is a good sunny place for them. Won't thee take these?" There was large grace in his movement as he held the violets toward her.

Her face had a flush of pink as she took the flowers, and she faltered, "But I don't want to rob thee."

"I shouldn't have taken them up to the house, anyway. The boys don't care much for things sitting round. I didn't mean to pick these, but I couldn't keep my hands off." He laughed a little.

And Teacher Sylvia laughed, "No wonder!" And they started up the slope to the school, Teacher Syl-

via pinning the violets against the white bib of her apron.

Elias did not forget that walk, for all his walks that followed, in the April days warming to the full glow of spring. Elias lived in that glow. He walked far and wide in the fields and woods springing into green. He saw May-apple colonies gathering; and anemones whitening the woodland slopes; he found many banks of violets.

They were reading Keats now, and Shelley, and Tennyson, in Elias's literature class. He read by the hour at his window, overlooking the leafing trees and the greening meadows. He could understand in this spring-tide how poets could write as those wrote. He wondered, even, how a man could help writing as these men had written.

He read of mornings early, before his room-mates were up. He walked of evenings after school. Latin and mathematics came between; he still studied them with diligence, but rather absently.

So the season grew apace, and April was done.

The first of May was fine and genial. Elias was off to the woods early in the afternoon. Down an open slope toward a little stream he came upon a great bed of violets; he did not want to pick them, these last, royal violets; he wanted to look at the blue of them. Finally he lay back, tilting his hat, and looked at the blue of the sky.

"Then to Sylvia let us sing"

. . . . .

To her let us garlands bring."—

the familiar verses came singing.

Then fancies seemed to come to him out of the shimmering spring sunshine, and made themselves into a sort of song. Elias sang it over and over in his mind, with little changes in it, as he lay with his big hand shielding his eyes, his body supine along the warm earth under the warm sun. It was a sort of flower song he had made, a May Day song, such as he had been reading in old English poets. It was a pretty idea, that of May Day games. It could not be "heathenish" as he had always been told. And the queen—he knew who would be Queen of the May, if there were May Day here! she of whom he had made this song! Why not—? His heart pounded violently. He had not thought—no, it was not good enough—it was such a little thing. But she liked violets—and it was May Day!

Elias lay very still, till he became gradually aware of the hollow hammering of a woodpecker, and the small music of the brook. He rose, picked up his hat, and dropped upon his knees among the spreading violets, pulling one by one the perfect flowers with their long, clear stems, and laying them carefully in the upturned black hat, deep in the lush, green leaves.

When the wide hat was heaped with blue, Elias paused and looked toward the western sky where a tinge of pink showed through the branches. It was after supper-time now. The dusk would soon be on.

Elias moved to the open slope and sat down there, taking from his pocket a pencil and a tiny tablet. In that pearl light of evening, Elias's little song

dropped, crystal-clear, upon the bit of paper. Finally he wrote the date, placed the sheet between two others, and put away paper and pencil.

The dusk was growing. Elias clasped his hands about his knee and looked off into the dimming heart of the woods. The "study bell" sounded across the fields. Elias had never broken "study hours" before, nor any school regulation. There were other rules to be broken this night, too. But he sat calmly as the air grew chilly under the coming stars. The moon came up and silvered the tips of the tree branches, and bits of open water in the tiny stream. In time the woods lay full in the light. Then Elias rose. There was the little basket to get—something to hold the violets; and he must be in his room before the closing hour. He lifted the hat full of violets from its dewy bed and passed out from the shade of the trees, the moonlight shining clear upon his resolute face.

It was well after nine o'clock when Elias stood at the door of the girls' dormitory slightly shaded by a stalwart maple. The rooms below were dark. But the light above, where Belle Morris roomed with Cynthia Ridge, was as bright through the yellow shade as that from the other window, in Teacher Sylvia's room. A knock at this time of night would be so extraordinary—the two doors were so near together—and formidable to him was a girl's mocking laugh.

But Elias entered the stairway and proceeded, as carefully as he could, up the narrow steps. It was a short flight, and his length of figure stood him in good stead; he could reach half-way up the stairs.

Just as he touched the door-knob to hang his frail basket of folded paper, a laugh pealed out from the other room. Elias waited a moment, close against the wall.

A sharp voice followed, "Belle, do be quiet—thee'll disturb everybody."

But Elias was thankful that the laugh came again, gay and clear. His knock sounded with it, and in a moment he was out of the house.

Turning the corner with a glance upward, he caught a glimpse of Teacher Sylvia rising from her study table at the half-open window, and he slipped out of the moonlight into the recess of the first doorway. He stood on the narrow threshold, his arms stretched across to the door-jamb, and his face hidden upon them. His body was motionless, tense; his mind, awlirl.

Elias did not know how long he stood there in the keen darkness of close-shut eyes. He felt vaguely the cool wood against his hand, the rough coat sleeve against his forehead, the rushing pulse in his rigid arms. Into the surge of his thought, at length, there came, upon a moment, a sweet, familiar tone; the tumult of his mind ceased; and Elias heard, with a heart growing strangely calm, a little melody dropping from above, half-hummed, in a voice that seemed to him, suddenly, like his mother's voice.

He lifted his head slowly and faced the glory of the moon-lit sky.



## The Flower of Love

By HARTLEY B. ALEXANDER

What shall the flower of true love be?  
O Lady sweet, come tell it me:  
Shall it be crimson? shall it be white?  
Or the deep true blue that is Heaven's light?  
A lily, a rose, or a pansy pied,—  
Meadow bloom or garden's pride,  
Or fruity promise of blossomy tree,—  
What shall the flower of true love be?

Shall it be shy as the violet,  
Or darling-named mignonette?  
Flower of Orient, shall it bear  
Musky incense rich and rare  
Mid its petals dead and hoary,—  
Or just the radiant Morning's glory,  
Born to live one brief bright hour?  
Say what shall be my true love's flower!

"Who is this that asketh me  
"What the flower of love shall be?  
" 'Tis a wit nor shrewd nor nimble  
"Telleth love by one mere symbol!  
"All the blossoms that do shine  
"On mead or wood, on bush or vine,  
"Are too poor to tell the story  
"Of the love that is love's glory!

“Petals fine as a sweet babe’s skin,  
“Flushed as the life that flows within,—  
“Dews that the morning doth surprise  
“Like laughter-lights in a sweet babe’s eyes,—  
“And delicate tendrils gleaming there  
“Like the sun on a sweet babe’s hair,—  
“If aught I’d say, I’d say to thee  
“Such the flower of love must be!”

O Lady dear, thou’st told to me  
What the flower of love should be—  
A blossom plucked from Paradise  
To shine into our mortal eyes,  
To bear within its crystal shell  
Living waters that do well  
From the quenchless springs above  
To replenish mortal love.

In its petals there will shine  
Tints of Beauty that’s divine,—  
Like a bud it will unfold  
To a heart of purest gold,—  
Till it give us love’s full measure,  
Till it be our life’s bright treasure,—  
For love is life, and life shall be  
The flower of love eternally.

## **I Am That I Am**

By WILLARD WATTLES

I do not murmur I am thrown  
Upon life's empty years,  
For I who walk with death for friend  
Trade not with fears.

I smile to look at other folk  
Who smile to look at me:  
They little know what eyes I have  
Nor what they see.

For I have smiled in Nineveh,  
And I have loved in Tyre,  
And I have seen fair Helen's face  
Fade in the fire.

When Cleopatra watched the work  
Of poison, I was there,  
Her fingers felt my breast grow cold,  
Her harp player.

I sought three arrows that were sent  
The friend of Jonathan,  
And I have seen the moon stand still  
In Ajalon.

From everlasting I am come,  
To everlasting go,—  
The pageant of the centuries  
Can work no woe.

The galley-master beat with whips  
And fed me broken bread;  
I faced him fairly eye to eye  
Till I was dead.

I drank the hemlock cup of sleep  
And bade my friends be still;  
I hung between two lonely men  
Upon a hill.

On other worlds I set my feet  
And visit other stars,  
And other spears have pierced my side  
And left strange scars.

I do not bend to men of scorn  
Nor measure what they say,  
For all their generations are  
But as a day.

I look behind the hearts of men,  
I see their secret thought,  
I speak in ways they later learn  
Were meaning-fraught.

And yet I am. Could you but wish,  
Believe, and touch my hand,  
You need not wait till after years  
To understand.

## Shake, Shake the Sweet Timbrels

By WILLARD WATTLES

'Twas the warm soft wind from the southland that  
blew me

A whisper of love ere the dawn of the day,  
And low through the dim wondering silence unto me  
I felt the red embers leap out of the gray;  
Night has uncovered me, darkness has spoken,  
The silver cord loosened, the golden bowl broken;  
I lift up the pitcher, the waters run over,  
Welcome, sweet Earth, you have wakened your lover.

Come to me, cling to me, follow, oh follow,  
Spring has come back on the wings of a swallow.  
Swing to the step of me out in the sun,  
Laugh with me, leap with me, Spring has begun.  
I see the new dandelions lush at my feet,  
The lilac is heavy, the crocus complete;  
I feel the keen breath of warm beauty around me,  
I sway, for my sweetheart, the Spring-time has  
found me.

Shake, shake the sweet timbrels in time to that  
dancing,

'Tis the bare-bodied Spring and her lover advancing.  
Let the willow trees trail like her unsnooded hair,  
Was ever so slender a dancer and fair?  
Her lips are live roses, the flush of the peach  
Is faint on her cheeks, like a thrush is her speech,

Her feet are blue-veined where they shift and retreat,  
And the thrill of our limbs is like fire when they  
meet.

Hairy Pan is asleep with the Winter's numb ache in  
him,

Crash the mad cymbals above him and waken him.  
Join the wild festival, pipe to the carnival,  
Seek the dear loveliness wound in love's coronal.  
Through the white birches are faces that hover,  
Frail as the snow-drops the south winds uncover;  
Enfold them and foot it, fleet, fleet to that dancing,  
'Tis the bare-bodied Spring and her lover advancing.

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### **The Lament at the Wedding**

By EDWARD J. O'BRIEN

I will sit here and crouch and wait, nor am I gay,  
At the foot of the Brown Hillock, where I, a girl,  
grew grey:  
I, a poor silly girl, and great were my lover's vows.  
They have taken him away from my lonely wee glen  
of boughs,  
The wee glen of cuckoos, and rushes on the ground.  
It is there, in the darkness, the drifting herds are  
found,

And fair maidens fending the new-born calves from  
death,  
And stooping down in kindness they blow on them  
their breath.  
It is there are nuts and rowans, where the wind is  
flowing south,  
And they, love, with the taste of honey on thy mouth.  
Brown nuts that hang there upon the hazel tree,  
And I, love, to gather them, to gather them with thee.  
A thousand shrouds on my friends, that death may  
steal them with his blast,  
They not to have left me to seal thy beauty fast.  
It is they put clouds around us, the way we were  
naked fools,  
Would be having not a penny to sit on alehouse  
stools.  
The one would tell that story, let it choke him in his  
mouth,  
And his cattle let them wither in the bitter summer  
drouth.  
Three-score white-shouldered cows are breathing in  
thy fold,  
Three-score dark-grey cows at Rannoch's foot are  
told,  
And thine in any green field a rich herd of mares,  
Three-score of goats, and white sheep in pairs.  
Gleyed-eyed John they called thee, and all their  
bodies shook,  
And yet, to my thinking, kind was thy look.  
The slope of thy cheek like the sea-gull, thy two sides  
like the swan,

Thy kiss was sweet as apples, thy breath of cinnamon.

Thy wedding night is making thee a fine and manly man

With four-and-twenty gallants drinking while they can,

With thy elegant maidens, in linen and in silk,  
To laugh and to praise thee, and they as white as milk.

But should I get no more of thee, it's this that I will say,

Come now and invite me to thy wedding day,  
To the wedding of the youth, whom I fancied more or less,

Though maybe I'd be dancing to keep them from a guess.

And a pair of gloves thou'lt buy me, and linen for a shroud

The night I'd be dancing with all the wedding crowd,  
And a coffin of the ash for a cover under ground,  
And thou shalt know in truth then where I can be found,

And wherever thou shalt go then, ah! but I will pray  
That gladness may go with thee, though it's I that am grey.



## Carl Sandburg's "Chicago Poems"

By JOHN T. FREDERICK

When *Poetry* published a group of poems by Carl Sandburg, a few months ago, a friend remarked "Here is a real poet." That judgment is verified by the recently published volume, *Chicago Poems*. The book lacks uniformity of purpose and achievement, and much of it is relatively trivial. But nevertheless it constitutes a permanent contribution to the literature of the Middle West and of America.

In its form Sandburg's work falls in the modern classes of imagism and free verse. In certain of the best poems of the book, such as *Chicago*, the manner of Whitman is suggested, perhaps as much by kinship of thought as by the form. It is amusing to observe, by the way, how studiously the modern critics of free verse steer clear of good old Walt. The sweeping and scathing condemnation which is so common seems a trifle impotent when one thinks of *When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloomed*. It is almost equally inapplicable to a poem of such sheer beauty and power as is found in *The Road and the End*:

I shall foot it  
Down the roadway in the dusk,  
Where shapes of hunger wander  
And the fugitives of pain go by.  
I shall foot it  
In the silence of the morning,

See the night slur into dawn,  
Hear the slow great winds arise  
Where tall trees flank the way  
And shoulder toward the sky.

The broken boulders by the road  
Shall not commemorate my ruin.  
Regret shall be the gravel under foot.  
I shall watch for  
Slim birds swift of wing  
That go where wind and ranks of thunder  
Drive the wild processions of rain.

The dust of the traveled road  
Shall touch my hands and face.

As the title of the volume indicates, the writer is primarily interested in things of the here and now. But very fine response to values which superficially seem rather remote from most of his subject matter is seen in *Salvage*:

Guns on the battle lines have pounded now a  
year between Brussels and Paris.

And, William Morris, when I read your old  
chapter on the great arches and naves and  
little whimsical corners of the Churches of  
Northern France—Br-rr!

I'm glad you're a dead man, William Morris,  
I'm glad you're down in the damp and  
mouldy, only a memory instead of a living  
man—I'm glad you're gone.

You never lied to us, William Morris, you loved  
the shape of those stones piled and carved  
for you to dream over and wonder because  
workmen got joy of life into them,

Workmen in aprons singing while they ham-  
mered, and praying, and putting their songs  
and prayers into the roofs and walls, the  
bastions and cornerstones and gargoyles—  
all their children and kisses of women and  
wheat and roses growing.

I say, William Morris, I'm glad you're gone,  
I'm glad you're a dead man.

Guns on the battle lines have pounded a year  
now between Brussels and Paris.

The most important portions of the book, how-  
ever, are the twenty-odd poems which constitute  
Carl Sandburg's interpretation of the city of Chi-  
cago in the year 1916. In *The Shovel Man*, *Grace-  
land*, *Onion Days*, *Skyscraper*, Chicago speaks.  
Clearly, without adornment, with unquestionable  
authenticity, the city records itself. "Alive and  
coarse and strong and cunning," Chicago is here.  
It is not the Chicago of a blind enthusiast, nor any  
more the Chicago of a hopeless cynic, but simply  
Chicago: "All the crazy wonderful slamming roar  
of the streets"—"the dark and dust of a house  
down in a slum"—"Twenty-five thousand dollars  
set aside for roses, lilacs, hydrangeas, tulips"—  
"the shadows where two streets cross"—"huddled  
and ugly walls"—"the touch and the blowing cool  
of great free ways beyond the walls."

It is the clearness and validity of this interpretation which gives the book its greatness. *Chicago Poems* is a unique and necessary document in the case against the dominant ideals of our generation. It is a simple record of facts, rather than a preachment based on facts. Carl Sandburg recognizes that our pseudo-civilization denies to millions of men in America the simple joys of the beasts—good fare, “the great sky, and the reckless rain,” to say nothing of the complex joys of men. He recognizes that an economy which knows no values but “bread and wages” is a false economy. He perceives that competitive commerce as an end in itself is ghastly and absurd. He denies that the social order built on “a little handful of pay on a few Saturday nights” can endure. But he seldom voices this recognition and denial. For the most part he is willing simply to see and utter.

I shall cry over the dead child of a stockyard  
hunky.

His job is sweeping blood off the floor.

He gets a dollar seventy cents a day when he  
works

And it's many tubs of blood he shoves out with  
a broom day by day.

Now his three-year-old daughter

Is in a white coffin that cost him a week's wages.

Every Saturday night he will pay the under-  
taker fifty cents till the debt is wiped out.

The hunky and his wife and the kids

Cry over the pinched face almost at peace in the  
white box.

They remember it was scrawny and ran up high  
doctor bills.

They are glad it is gone for the rest of the fam-  
ily now will have more to eat and wear.

Yet before the majesty of Death they cry around  
the coffin

And wipe their eyes with red bandanas and sob  
when the priest says, "God have mercy on  
us all."

I have a right to feel my throat choke about this.  
You take your grief and I mine—see?

Tomorrow there is no funeral and the hunky  
goes back to his job sweeping blood off the  
floor at a dollar seventy cents a day.

All he does all day long is keep on shoving hog  
blood ahead of him with a broom.

When men study the growth of humanity in the  
twentieth century, they will read Carl Sandburg's  
*Chicago Poems*.

## **Above the Battle**

(1616-1916 and Thereafter)

By WILLIAM ELLERY LEONARD

There's now one sound above the battle blown,  
Above the nations hurling flame for flame,  
One love which hate itself is proud to own,  
One voice of man tumultuous with thy fame!  
Shakespeare, the kingdoms of divided earth  
Honor today thy conquests o'er them all;  
And none who know the meaning of thy worth  
Today will use thee for a clansman call.  
But rather, in these hundred years times three  
Of power still creating light and life,  
We find the omen of thy work to-be —  
Hereafter, healer of these wounds of strife.  
Above the battle we behold thy face,  
Above the battle a united race.



## The Midland Library

"The short story—a cross section of life." A trite caption, perhaps, but one that may well be applied to William Allen White's book, *God's Puppets* (Macmillan. \$1.25), for each story in it is just that—a section from the life of a Kansas town.

New Raynham is typically middlewestern, a mushroom growth of the plains. Typically middlewestern, too, are its inhabitants—John Longford "coloneling around in a grand way in politics and in real estate," Boyce Stilworth, the small-town demagogue, the gold-worshipping Herringtons, the women thinly veneered with boarding-school culture. Through the shams and false pretenses of such a place and such people, Mr. White cuts relentlessly; through the cheap ideals, the meaningless architecture, the fortunes founded on fraud, the lies and cheats in religion, the mawkish sentiment in art; and at last he penetrates to things very great, very good. The vitality of a new and thriving place works through the crudity of New Raynham; from the struggles of its men, "*God's Puppets*" as they are, is wrought a hard-boned philosophy, expressive in faith that will endure.

In the way in which each of the five stories builds up this conception of place, of people, of underlying strength, lies their greatest value. The dramatic interest of *The One a Pharisee*, the lyric touch of *A Prosperous Gentleman*, the gripping reality and raw power of the whole are admirable but subordinate qualities. We read the book because in it Mr. White has felt and makes us feel that with "the planting of the flower seeds civilization came to stay," that we may see "the half gods go and the gods arrive."

Professor G. T. W. Patrick of the State University of Iowa is the author of *The Psychology of Relaxation* (Houghton Mifflin Co.). The thesis of this book is that man finds rest from the complexities of modern civilization by engaging himself in those activities which bring into play the old racial brain-paths,—paths which once served for the preservation of man, but which have lapsed into disuse by the continual strain put upon the higher centers. Relaxation in some form is absolutely essential, and if it is not provided in wholesome forms, man will take it in unwholesome forms; alcohol is the most usual of these destructive relaxations, but the most important and disastrous one is war. "Work man too hard," says Professor Patrick, "and he will stop work and go to war." This fact is thought basal in any consideration of the causes of the present European struggle. Alcohol and war are not the only topics, however, for profanity, and dancing and amusement crazes are dealt with most suggestively. Such a book, coming from Professor Patrick, is of course authoritative, and is written in that non-technical, precise and brilliant manner of which Professor Patrick is master.



